

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 14, 2019

Stefano Pessina
Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc.
200 Wilmont Road
Deerfield, Illinois 60015

Dear Mr. Pessina,

Exactly five years ago, we wrote to Walgreens urging that your company—whose mission statement is to “champion the health and well-being of every community in America”—stop selling tobacco products. At the time, we noted that doing so would foster the health and wellness of Walgreens customers and send a critical message to all Americans—and especially children—about the dangers of tobacco use. Unfortunately, your company rejected our request and instead chose to continue selling tobacco products—including illegally to children.

According to new information from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), 22 percent of Walgreens stores nationwide inspected by FDA have been caught selling tobacco products to children since 2010, making your stores the largest violators of illegal tobacco product sales to our nation’s children. This is unacceptable. Given that your company is either unwilling or unable to keep tobacco products out of the hands of kids who frequent your stores, we once again write to urge you, as a health care pharmacy, to put children over profits and immediately stop selling dangerous and addictive tobacco products at your stores.

For decades, the United States has been enormously successful at reducing youth tobacco use, including by reducing cigarette smoking among high school students from 28 percent in 2000 to 8 percent in 2018. However, these gains are at risk of being reversed because of newer tobacco products being sold to children in your stores—especially electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) like JUUL and their accompanying kid-friendly flavors (fruit medley, mango, cool cucumber, crème brûlée, mint). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tobacco use among our nation’s children is now increasing. Between 2017 and 2018, use of tobacco products among high school students grew more than 38 percent, with nearly 5 million youth now using a tobacco product. This alarming increase has been driven largely by an increase in e-cigarette use. Over the last year, we saw a 78 percent increase in high-school use of e-cigarettes, and a 48 percent increase in middle-school use of e-cigarettes.

According to your website, Walgreens is committed to “supporting the health, well-being and vitality of the communities we serve; enabling young people to achieve their potential wherever they are in the world; and developing and mobilizing our resources and partnerships in the fight against cancer.” Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing more than 480,000 people every year. For the first time in decades, tobacco use

Sincerely,

Dick Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator